

Mixed Greens

An assortment of fresh tossed ideas.

001 Practice for Future Voters

You can pick your nose but you can't pick your voters by Lindsay Pryor and Amanda Meyer

Voting practice for future voters by Lindsay Pryor

Learning voting from the experts by Sandy Baxter

Promoting the mock election in your county by Amanda Meyer

You can pick your nose but you can't pick your voters

Translation: it would be nice if voters understood everything perfectly and followed all the correct procedures but, let's be realistic, they don't. And you can't trade them in like a gas-guzzler.

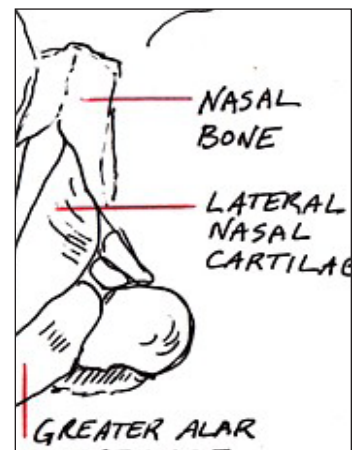
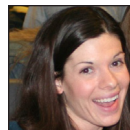
Some voters will need help with the voting process. It's as sure as death and taxes that some of your neighbors have disabilities, speak a different language, or have never voted before. The bottom line is, your neighbors need you to show them the way.

As an elections official, you can help people help themselves. You're practically a fairy godmother/father (minus magic wand), bestowing your wisdom upon the masses. Teaching your neighbors good voting habits isn't a totally selfless act, either. A lot of your staff time and money is tied up correcting voter error, errors that could be prevented if your neighbors knew what they were doing. Plus it's really good PR for your office, and could even lead to some nice thank you cards, baked goods maybe, general feelings of goodwill, etc.

So here it is, decision time: do you nod in mild agreement and go back to reading email? Or do you pledge to find a neighbor in need and show them how to take control of their own life through the power of their vote?

This email series brought to you by your election colleagues will present you with ideas and experiences to help you educate and reach out to your voters. We hope you enjoy the casual tone and helpful information. And please, please, if you have something to share with your fellow election workers across the state, don't be shy. Let us know; we are happy to share your expertise with others.

By Lindsay Pryor and Amanda Meyer
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If you have an experience to share with your colleagues, we want to hear from you; email or call Lindsay or Amanda.

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Voting practice for future voters

The YMCA has a motto, "democracy must be learned by each generation." Not a bad sentiment. Probably not too many of your neighbors would disagree. Another popular saying is "the best way to learn is to do."

The mock election is a cheap and easy way to let kids practice voting. The goal is they will learn good voting habits and be ready (and excited) to vote when they turn 18.

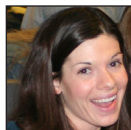
WEI users can have their mock election ballots feature county-specific measures and candidates. The ballot will also use your style: fill in the oval or square or complete the line.

Thanks to this year's improvements, the mock election will teach students about voter registration, vote by mail, and signing ballot envelopes. Want to bring the mock election to your local school? There are four easy steps.

1. Contact Lindsay or Amanda by Sept. 11 and tell us you want to participate.
2. Promote your mock election. Need some ideas? See the next page.
3. During voting week, you do nothing. You've already promoted the mock election.
4. Send feedback to Lindsay or Amanda after the mock election is over.

If your county doesn't use WEI to file candidates, you can still have a link to the mock election on your county website. Just call and ask. 800-448-4881

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Learning voting from the experts

Normally in the spring and fall each year we are contacted by the various schools in Thurston County about providing election material for them.

In the spring we conduct the schools' Associate Student Body (ASB) officer elections. We design and program a ballot and provide the school district with a tabulating machine and "I voted" stickers.

This effort helps to introduce the students to the election process and the mechanics of marking an optical scan ballot.

For the elementary school students, last year we assisted them by providing them with a mock Presidential Election or governor's ballot. Many of the elementary schools used this opportunity as part of their curriculum. Again we designed an optical scan ballot, with tabulating machine, provided stand up polling booths and stickers etc.

The partnership helps the students become aware of the election process and hopefully starts a life-long voting habit.

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"Hear ye!" Promoting the mock election

1. Start close to home. Will your children vote? Your nieces and nephews? Use the lunchroom bulletin board to ensure all your county employees know their children can vote in the mock election.

2. Talk to educators directly. Unless you know teachers at your local school, start with the principal. Ask for the name of the person who teaches civics or government or the school librarian. Tell them you want to help your future voters learn to become engaged citizens. When you meet with educators, be sure hand them something they can use in their class such as the instructions for conducting an in-class paper mock election, or some curriculum. Volunteer to be a guest speaker. If they can't squeeze you into the classroom, ask about service or leadership clubs.

3. Go where the youth are. Does the 4-H know about the mock election? What about the YMCA, student leadership, or the environmental club? Young people gather together around the topics that matter to them. Take a few minutes to learn what matters to them, then point out how voting is a way to make a difference. Be specific, let them know which elected officials make the decisions. Take an interest in your young neighbors. They'll be eligible to vote next time you are up for election.

4. Mention the mock election to community groups. If you are meeting with the Kiwanis, for example, to talk about some unrelated topic, find a way to mention the importance of community involvement. Mention the ways you bring value to the community, including educating the next generation of voters and providing free resources to teachers.

5. Partner with a scholarship source. Many organizations award small scholarships to students who win essay contests. Try the VFW, the Grange, or the League of Women's Voters. Find one willing to award a scholarship for the best essay that answers the question, "Why I'll vote." Hint: let the organization run the contest. Your role can be limited to promotion.

6. Be a guest columnist. Call the reporter you have on speed dial and ask if you can write an article about how important this year's ballot measures are, the latest improvement that ensures their votes are secret, the outstanding service they will find at the voter service center, etc. Inspire the readers, move them, create a longing to be involved. Then, suggest ways for the most experienced voter "help your grandkids fill out their ballots" to the youngest "vote in the mock election so you are experienced when you turn 18." Don't forget to tell them where to go for info: your website.



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